

## Humanitarian and social attitudes in Hatam Taei's poems

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### Abstract

A well-known Arab man, Hatam Taei was one of the most generous men of that time and the reputation of his bounty and benevolence is still widespread in all corners of the world. Not only known for generosity among Arab people, but also in other nations' literatures, his name has been welcomed by poets and used with the hospitality and magnanimity attributes, thus embellishing their works. He was from a clan named Tey, one of the famous clans of the Arabian Peninsula. Also, he was one of the astute poets of the age of pre-Islam paganism. His cognomen was "Aba-sofyaneh" or "Aba-edi" and he has an exquisite poem collection titled "Poetry of Hatam Taei". His poems are full of descriptions for generosity and benevolence and humanitarian characteristics as well as high moral and religious teachings. In the present paper, it was attempted to investigate humanitarian and social characteristics in Hatam Taei's poems including chastity, hospitality, good fame, tolerance and patience, forgiveness, and lack of interest in worldly commodities.

**Keywords:** Hatam Taei, Humanitarian and social attitudes

### Introduction

Although names like "Ka'b Ibn Haqqah" and "Harem Ibn Senan" have been mentioned in the age of pre-Islam paganism as generous people, and although Ibn Abde Rabbah and even Jahez have considered Kaab to be more generous than Hatam, Hatam's reputation and accounts concerning him are more than those of others. According to Ibn Abde Rabbah, only Hatam's forgiveness has been related often, though he has also mentioned the maxim "Ajvad-o-men-Kaab Ibn Haqqah". Sometimes, Hatam Taei has been absolutely called "Javad-ol-Arab". Ibn Kalbi and Ibn Aarabi have related narrations regarding Hatam's forgiveness, chivalry, personality and good temper, not just bounding Hatam's bounties to his life span. The Tey clan believed that whoever attended at Hatam's grave would be fed in some way. In this regard, anecdotes and distiches have been narrated that have been included in detail in the Arabian Nights (Bokkar, 1971, 408).

Many of the accounts regarding Hatam Taei's bounties are fictitious or at least exaggerated, and some individuals have confirmed this. According to Fakhouri, facts and myths have been mixed in these anecdotes. Among the most comprehensive sources in which Hatam's accounts and poems have been collected, the book "Al-Aghani" can be named which includes detailed accounts by Mofazzal Zabbi, Muhammad Ibn Saeb Kalbi, Abu Umar Sheybani, Ibn Aarabi, and Ibn Sekkit (Nicholson, 2001, 85). Some traditional works about Hatam Taei have not yet reached us, including Hatam's account by Zubair Ibn Bokkar deceased in 256 AH and Yaqut Hemavi in 1993. Further, some people have been entitled as *Hatam* over the history, such as Fazl Ibn Yahya Barmaki deceased in 193 AH who was also known as "Hatam-ol-Islam" and "Hatam-ol-Ajvad" (Sa'albi:1985, 203).

### Hatam Taei in the Persian Literature

As in Arabic literature, Hatam Taei is an example of chivalry and generosity in Persian literature too. In old Persian poems as well as in many odes and panegyrics of Qaznavi poets Hatam's generosity has been mentioned and sometimes it has been accompanied by Rustam's bravery:

*"In benevolence, you are Hatam Taei. In fight, you are like Rustam.*

*Nay, Hatam is not generous compared with your munificence and donation. Nay, Rustam is not as mighty as you are in fight."*

(Roudaki, 1984, 26)

Given the meaning of the term "Tey" (i.e. to wrap) and the name of Hatam's clan as well as the pun established between these two, some poets have considered bounty of their panegyricized face beyond Hatam's bounty, stating that bounty of their praised faces has wrapped Hatam's. By adding the suffix "Kadeh" to Hatam, Adib Saber, Ibn Yamin, and Mulavi have conveyed the meaning of forgiveness:

*"He was a sea-hearted municipal so that each one of his hairs was full of generous people like Hatam.*

*Hatam would certainly become a beggar at his court if he was then alive; Even, Hatam would bend and descend down to his feet earth."*

(Mulavi, 2007, 924)

Hatam's name remained, for a long after Qaznavis, as a sample and indication of generosity in Persian poetry and prose:

*"How do you get so much food to donate daily?" a callow young man asked Hatam. "As long as I am alive and have strength in my body, my sustenance will continue to come from God." Hatam replied.*

(Attar, 1977, 368)

Despite the fact that Hatam's personality has been very popular among literary works and he is not the main hero in any Arabic literary work, a very impressive personality has been sketched from him in Eastern parts of the Islamic world. Master of speech, Saadi Shirazi, has transformed some accounts of Hatam Taei into Persian poetry that has become popular among people as a maxim:

*"Whoever that eats from the result of his own efforts, will not stoop to Hatam Taei's favors."*

(Saadi, 2007, 107)

Manochehri says about Hatam:

*"Since Hatam is from clan Tey, due to his donations, all the clan's people have become known as generous."*

(Manochehri, 2006, 231)

Ali Akbar Dehkhoda suggests a proverb about Hatam:

*"When all expenditures are from a guest's pocket, every host can easily become Hatam Taei (That is donations should be done from the host's side, not from the guest in the name of the host)."*

(Dehkhoda, 2011, vol. 2, 752)

### Hatam Taei's poems

Like the style of pagans, Hatam's poetry involves pride, epic as well as incorporeal concepts. According to Ibn Kalbi, Ghorzoyani had collected his poems in about 200 pages. His poetry contents are just parts of his works. These lyrics include short odes and parts that are mostly about moral values especially generosity and hospitality, thus describing the composer's personality. In this

poetry, signs of hard life in the pagan age are seen. Litterateurs have described Hatam's poems as excellent and eloquent thus considering him as an astute poet (Al-Fakhori, Bitá, 224).

His poem book has fewer than four hundred distiches. Some writing instruments of the age of pre-Islam paganism such as Ragh (thin skin on which writing is done) that have been used in Hatam Taei's poems show that Hatam dealt with such instrument (Hatam, Bitá, 80)

### **Humanitarian and social features in Hatam's poems**

Hatam Taei was a pagan poet and not a Muslim. However, many items are found among his works that not only don't contrast with the Islamic religion's principles, but also they are considered as high norms in the Islamic system.

#### **Generosity**

Hatam's fame and name are because of his generosity and that's because he has become an example in forgiveness. Hatam tells about his benevolence in most of his poems:

[Arabic] (Hatam, Bitá, 27-28)

*"He blames me out of depravity for forgiving my wealth, when a mean person grudges and does not give much. He says: Hey! Avoid overindulgence and extravagance. I see wealth respected among mean people. Leave me alone! You have plenty of wealth. Every individual moves along (behaves according to) the path to which they are used to. Leave me alone! My wealth is a shield for my reputation to protect it before it gets spoiled. Show me a donator that has died because of meagerness or a niggard that has become eternal [by his wealth]. Maybe I see what you see. From my wealth, I will spare a smooth and shiny shield, a fast horse, a straight spear, and a sharp Indian sword (These are the only things left from my wealth)."*

Against someone who blames him for forgiveness, he does not consider himself as a slave to wealth. He does not count his bounty out of feeling, but he describes it as one of his outstanding habits. He counts wealth as an instrument and shield to protect his reputation. Finally, he challenges the second person to an argument, wanting him to show a donator that has died due to bounty, thus persuading him. At the end of his life, he says farewell to life like a warrior, sparing nothing except a smooth and shiny shield, a fast horse and a sharp Indian sword because no one but a real fighting warrior deserves them.

In Hatam's philosophy of life, wealth should always serve the owner, and the owner should not serve the wealth [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitá, 34):

*"When for some people wealth is an idol, thanks to God, my wealth is at my service. Using it slaves are released and lawful food is eaten. When an expelled curmudgeon obliges [the needy], it [wealth] is forgiven."*

Confirming Hatam's view, Saadi, the Master of speech, says: money is for life's welfare, not life for gathering money (Kolliat: Golestan, 2007, 168) [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitá, 70)

*"By donating my wealth, I conserve my reputation and also demolish you (foes) [whatever against my reputation]."*

#### **Chastity**

Hatam confesses his chastity in his poems. In the absence of the man next door, he does not look dishonestly at his neighbor [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitá, 21)

*"I do not deceive my neighbor's bride (I do not betray my neighbor) so that darkness hide me [from eyes], whereas I will not get hidden [from eyes]. Do I defame my neighbor and betray him? I seek refuge from God from what I do as long as I am alive."* [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitá, 33)

*"I swore not to enter a maid's solitude as long as pigeons coo."* [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitá, 52)

*"My neighbor's wife does not complain about me when her husband is absent (I am chaste) and I do not visit her."*

In these distiches, Hatam boasts of his chastity, saying that he does not look at neighbors' women with traitorous eyes.

### **Hospitality**

Hospitality and accepting guests in any situation were among good characteristics of the pagans. Arabs honored guests greatly and prepared best of what they had for him. They deemed respecting guests obligatory. Pagans were famous for their guest feeding. Some of them used to set a fire so that guests could see it, thus getting directed to their homes, hence the name "Nar-ol-Ghora" or "Nar-or-Ziafah" for this fire. Hospitality was not limited to food and welcome, but also providing support and defense for guests was incumbent on the host (Ali, 1968, p. 68).

For a long time, Hatam's name has been a symbol for chivalry and generosity. Because of two distinguishing characteristics "hospitality" and "bravery" in him, in Arab literature terminology, he has been called "Fata", to the extent that his mercifulness and magnanimity sometimes worked against him (Al-Abshihi, 1989, vol. 1, 251).

Hatam Taei boasts of this characteristic in his poems [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitā, 28)

"Don't you know that once a guest enters my home unexpectedly and it is hard for me to provide party food, I would serve him with a fatty hump?" [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitā, 52)

*"When niggards' dogs bark and annoy injured guests, my domestic dog is timid and I behave with hospitality and when breaths get jealous intensely, I bestow (When people do not donate, I am the most benevolent). Many a time my dogs bark, but they do it less for those who enter my house. When people get plagued with famine and drought, my cooking pot does not complain [of emptiness]. Sometimes I prepare pot legs and sometimes I give the pots provisions and food supply. I place my pot with either little or much provisions above in space outstandingly, so that it can be seen and it is not behaved with stinginess (I put it above so guests could see it and I am not a niggard). There is no veil (covering) over my fire to hide it at night for light-seekers, and I turn it on."*

In above distiches, the poet mentions timidity of his dogs. Pagan Arabs interpret hospitality as dogs' timidity, because in a house where many guests traverse, guard dogs will no longer bark at anyone [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitā, 91)

"My pots are located in the desert [above and observable] and my dog does not bark at guests. If I find no food for my guests, I look around myself [for meat]." [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitā, 46)

"O Mavi! Wealth goes away at dawn (once through forgiving) and comes at night (it is gained). From wealth there remain speeches [what people talk about], good and eternal fame."

Here, Hatam considers wealth for gaining good fame and using it in getting virtues. He believes that wealth is not something to make humans eternal; but it [wealth] eternizes his name by benevolence and serving people.

According to Saadi Hatam's good fame will stay for ever: [Arabic] (Saadi, 2007, 100)

### **Tolerance and patience**

"Make your relatives accompany you and preserve their friendship. You will not be able to be tolerable unless you fake patience and tolerance. Once you eradicated the clan's spites and enmities with flexibility and tolerance as well as avoiding annoyance, your illnesses and diseases will be eliminated." [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitā, 82)

Hatam is peace-loving. He considers flexibility and toleration the cure of wiping tribal enmities. Although he lived in the age of pre-Islam paganism, he does not believe in such pagan poems that nothing but blood washes blood.

### **Remission**

"I forgive the benevolent person for their indecent speech and deeds and I pardon the mean person's insults with chivalry." [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitā, 82)

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### ***Wealth is not a death shield***

“O Mavi! Wealth does not make a youth free from needs when the soul reaches the throat and the chest gets tight (Reaches do not benefit him when death attends).” [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitā, 46)

Hatam does not consider riches as a shield against death. Here, he tells his wife that nothing can prevent human death, and wealth must not cause human negligence about death.

### ***Death and lack of dependence on worldly stuff***

[Arabic]

(Hatam, Bitā, 72)

“The youth strives while the death reaches him and everyday death gets closer to the youth. I know that death will get me one day and I will be harnessed from my world.”

### ***Quran verses inferred in Hatam's poems***

Hatam's clan was Christian, but he did not accept Christianity. As regards his life account, he has been counted as one of pre-Islam Christian poets (Serkis, 1410 AH, vol. 1, col. 730). What sounds odd in poems attributed to Hatam is swearing by God's home (Beyt-o-Allah), prescience, bones revival on the Day of Judgment: [Arabic] (Hatam, Bitā, 88)

Nonetheless, some poems in his poetry are meanings of The Holy Quran's verses: (Hatam, Bitā, 29)

“Now eat from God's sustenance and relax. For sure, your sustenance is on the beneficent God's shoulder.”

In this distich, meaning of the verses “[verses]” is seen. (Hatam, Bitā, 84)

“Hey! I swear by someone who does not know but prescience and who that revives white bones after they have decayed.” In this verse, meanings of the verses is existent.

### **Conclusion**

Hatam Taei was one of the poets of the age of pre-Islam paganism and one of the most renowned bountiful, chivalrous, and brave Arab men of that time. Hatam's poems are in a pagan literature style, having the same intentions that make up the main view of Arab poems in the age of pre-Islam paganism. In contrast to pagan poets, Hatam does not consider riches as means of bragging to other clans, but as means of gaining virtues and helping the poor and solving people's problems in famine years and as spare to record and keep good fame. Like his deeds, his poems are indicative of integrity and honesty, encouraging what humanity claims.

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